

Batten down the hatches
and hold on to your cat...

ALF HEADS FOR OZ!



ALF, television's highest rating alien, is set to visit Australia.

"I am very excited," he says at the mere suggestion of an Oz trip. "Of course I am — they love me."

Negotiations have begun between the Seven Network and the creator and producer of Alf, Paul Fusco, for a special episode to be filmed Down Under.

Seven's program manager, Glen Kinging, has had talks with Paul in Los Angeles and he told TV WEEK that an Australian Alf special is looking promising.

"They are very keen," Glen says. "They're knocked out by the success of the series in Australia."

"Paul pointed out that the film-

The alien with stars in his eyes

STARDOM has proved to be difficult for Alf to handle.

Like many stars plucked from obscurity to the dizzy heights of international fame, Alf is experiencing ego problems. Being an alien does not help.

The exact amount of money Alf receives per episode remains top

ing of Alf is a slow and complicated process but they said they'll try their best. It's not beyond the realms of possibility," Glen says.

But technical difficulties and storylines still have to be worked out, according to Jamie Jaffe, the executive in charge of production on Alf.

"It's very hard to take Alf out of the studio," he says. "We've tried it with one episode called Looking For Lucky. The cat is missing and Alf is blamed. So we had Alf looking for him in alleyways.

"Also, our storyline has Alf hidden from the rest of the world so it's very hard to find a storyline which will take him to another country."

Alf is filmed on a closed set so the secret of how the cat-eating alien walks and talks cannot be revealed.

Speaking to TV WEEK from his Los Angeles home, creator Paul Fusco says he dreamed up the character two years ago.

"I had the idea of Alf for another show I was working on but never got to use him, so I kept him on the back burner," he says.

When it came to approaching a network in America to give the go-ahead for a pilot, Paul took a back seat and let Alf do all the talking.

They took Alf into the office of the head of NBC, Brandon Tartikoff, to sell the show.

"We brought Alf in and had them meet him," Paul says. "He began insulting Brandon, who loved it.

"I don't know how you'd explain Alf unless you saw him. I told the network we'd be doing a show that is going to be very different — whether it takes off or not, let's take a chance on it.

"I didn't want to do a Facts Of Life or a Webster."

David Brown

secret but, as the star of a top-rating show, and also the only being on Earth who could play the lead role, Alf can demand top dollars.

"Stardom has really gone to Alf's head since the show began," says one cast member.

On occasions, it seems Alf bosses his co-stars around. The usual victim is his youngest colleague, Benji Gregory, who plays Brian Tanner. Alf's normal greeting to Benji is: "Fetch my coffee."

"Alf thinks he is the only one in the show at times," another show insider reveals. "We have to remind him of his humble beginnings and that when he arrived from Melmac he was nothing but an alien."

There have also been some problems in the dining room. As all the cast eat together, several have complained about having to watch Alf eat.

"Okay, so he doesn't eat cats any more but he still eats like a pig," says Andrea Elson, who plays Lyn. "He will eat anything — and so much of it. If he can't have cats, he thinks he'll have cat food and he even eats the can because he says he needs the roughage."

But unlike the well-publicised

squabbles on other shows, there is no lingering feud on the Alf set.

"He's trying to fit in as best he can but he takes ordinary circumstances, and gets things mixed up, confused," says one of his many sympathisers.

"He's very witty off screen, too, and he keeps us all laughing," says the mother of one cast member. "When anyone has had a conflict with him, they always make up. After all, he has a good heart and he means well."

